

To: Austin City Council  
Re: Dec 10, 2020, City Council Agenda item 87, 218 S. Lamar  
Rezoning in the Butler Shores Waterfront Overlay from CS-V to PUD

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

The number of registered voters in Precinct 340 (Butler Shores and the north part of S. Lamar) has climbed from around 1,300 in 2005 to 4,700 today, an increase of more than 260%. Almost half of these voters are between 25 and 35 years old, and 66% are under 40. In the November election, 3,071 of them voted on the City propositions: 2,115 voted for Prop A and 2,342 voted for Prop B, confirming their preference for fewer cars and more pedestrian, bicycle, and transit options. They have been expressing that preference in their daily lives, by driving less and owning fewer cars, to the point that a 2019 study found VMU parking garages in the Zilker area were occupied at 50% of the City code's standard requirements.

Clearly, the Waterfront Overlay Ordinance and the Vertical Mixed Use development standards have transformed this voting precinct, producing exactly the desired sort of urban redevelopment, or "densification of the central city to reduce traffic impacts," to quote the latest staff summary for the PUD rezoning at 218 S. Lamar. These voting data are significant to this rezoning case because they demonstrate that the applicant's and City staff's arguments in favor of a mass-and-glass office building with a 650-car parking garage are wildly inconsistent with reality in the area of Butler Shores and South Lamar.

Some of those residents who could afford to live downtown but instead choose to live in VMU-style buildings have already told you that they were attracted to Butler Shores to escape the miserable conditions created by large office buildings, while maintaining their access to jobs and recreation. Even so, the area is facing a huge surplus of commercial space, especially office space. These residents and voters are within half a mile of the new office buildings at Shoal Creek and Cesar Chavez, the row of office buildings on Barton Springs Road from Dawson to South First (most of which are scheduled to be vacated by their current occupants), and the smaller office buildings lining South Lamar from the PARD offices at Riverside to Lamar Union. Now that the new residents of Butler Shores and South Lamar have turned out to vote for better transit, your approval of a 650-car parking garage blocking their access to bike lanes, bus stops, and parkland seems like a slap in the face. The Council should instead be focused on new environmental and commercial construction standards to guide the conversion of Austin's excess office space to residential space with minimal release of greenhouse gases and reduced carbon impact. Austin needs rooftop solar panels, not rooftop party space.

Please, acknowledge the existence and good sense of the growing population of Butler Shores by rejecting this PUD rezoning and its 650-car parking garage.

Thank you for your service to the community throughout these trying times.

Lorraine Atherton

In District 5, working from home without a car since 1986